

The Sudan Project is a mission outreach of the Mt. Juliet Church of Christ in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee.



THE

# SUDAN PROJECT

Churches of Christ at work in Sudan

## God Is At Work In Sudan

### One Woman Leads A Village To Christ!

One chilly evening near last Christmas, I received a phone call from Rannie Butler, a woman I had never met from South Haven, Miss. She was seeking help to start a New Testament church in the South Sudanese village of Opari and had been given my name as someone who might be able to help her.



Rannie Butler of South Haven, MS, Samuel's teacher.

Several years prior to that phone call, she had been visiting her mother-in-law in a nursing home in Nashville, Tenn. While there, she met a Sudanese refugee, Samuel Akeri, who was working at the facility. Being a zealous Christian, Rannie invited him to enroll in a Bible correspondence course; and the young man accepted! This simple act by a visiting woman led to the eventual conversion of Samuel and his wife, Margaret, a short time later.

Before the Sudanese war, Samuel was one of eight children in a family that lived on subsistence farming and raising some chickens. When Samuel was about 15 years old, the Muslim Sudanese ramped up their persecution of blacks. The soldiers were shooting into stores and villages, ransacking markets owned by blacks, and randomly picking up men to be questioned about their loyalty to the Sudanese government. This was typical Muslim persecution of black non-Muslim Sudanese.

### The Violence Escalates

The unrest escalated, and planes started coming over their villages and shooting at the huts and people and setting their grass-roofed homes on fire. Raids began occurring in some villages, and the men were taken away and the women and children sold into slavery to Sudanese Arabs.

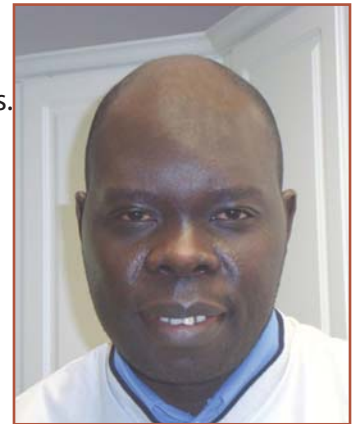
Samuel's family often had to flee their home for safety. His sister was killed while running away from gunfire.

When Samuel was 16, he was arrested along with about 40 other men and boys. He and four friends escaped during the night, however.

They made their way by darkness through the countryside, hiding during the day from the Sudanese soldiers. They ate anything they could find to stay alive and finally arrived at a refugee camp in Kenya some months later.

Eventually Samuel was transferred to Uganda, together with other family members. There he married his friend Margaret. After seven years in a refugee camp, they were able to come to the United States and have been here for 11 years. They are both now citizens, and Samuel has even earned a college degree. Margaret is working as a practical nurse.

In 2008, Samuel returned to his home village of Opari for the first time in 15 years. Having become a Christian, he wanted to share Christianity with his relatives and friends so that they could become Christians too.



Samuel Akeri

## God Works in Mysterious Ways His Wonders to Perform

It just so happened that I was going to be in South Sudan at the same time, accompanied by DeWayne Griffin and Joseph Smith of Nashville and John Ed Clark from Fresno, Calif. When I asked Samuel to show me on a map where his village was, it turned out that it was only about five miles off the main road we would be traveling! So on our trip, we were able to visit Samuel's home and preach to the large gathering that came to welcome us. Samuel stayed on in Opari a couple more weeks, arranged for a plot of land for a building, and helped build a meeting place.

baptized, and a preacher from another Sudanese congregation has moved there to teach them the Bible.



Samuel and his wife, Margaret



Part of the crowd on the first Sunday of the beginning of the Opari church.

God is truly at work in South Sudan! Thanks to people like Rannie Butler, Samuel Akeri and each of you, the church in Sudan is "on the grow."



The Akeri family



The meeting place with sign all ready for the church to begin.

On that visit, he arranged with his family and village leaders for a church of Christ to be established in Opari. Now, all he needed was a preacher to come and teach. And this was why Rannie Butler was calling.

I immediately called Samuel and arranged to meet him, Margaret and his four fine children and was given a warm brotherly greeting. Samuel told me of his plans to return to his village in South Sudan again in February of 2009 and hoped to help start the church while there.

It was a very simple building with a roof covered by a white UN tarpaulin and no sides. But in front now stands a sign, "Opari Church of Christ, Welcome You."

The villagers didn't have a preacher yet, and no one had been baptized. But they had worked hard and done their best to establish a church of Christ!

A couple of weeks later, a Sudanese preacher, Isaya Jackson, was able to visit them. Fifty-four adults and 45 children attended the first service! Several have now been

*This righteousness  
from God  
comes through faith  
in Jesus Christ  
to all who believe.*

ROMANS 3:22